

WSDOT Commerce Corridor Feasibility Study

Fact Sheet

The concept behind the study

The concept of the Commerce Corridor is that of a north-south, limited-access corridor that could offer additional capacity for truck and passenger traffic as well as accommodate rail and utilities. The intent is that the Corridor would begin in Lewis County and extend north to the Canadian border, and that it must be developed, financed, designed, constructed, and operated by private sector consortiums. This study is not related to the past project popularly known as "I-605;" in fact, it differs from the previous "I-605" study in many ways.

Scope of the study

This study is intended to determine the financial, environmental and cultural feasibility of private sector involvement in the planning or possible construction of a potential commerce corridor between Canada and Lewis County. The Study results will provide the Legislature with information to help it determine whether the idea should be advanced for further study and consideration. The current study is conceptual only, but the current estimates of geographic impact are dramatically less than the rumored five-miles wide. The timeframe focuses on the needs in the next 20 to 50 years.

Multiple issues will be included in this preliminary stage:

- Financial, both the costs associated with creating a corridor and the potential interest level from investors
- Features, what should be included in the project? Rail? A utility corridor? A road for freight traffic? A rail line for passenger and/or freight transit? A pedestrian or bike path?
- Environmental issues, what features are there along the potential Corridor path, how might they be handled and what would the associated costs be?
- Legal and statutory, are there any regulations or laws to be aware of, how might they be handled, what would those costs look like?
- Community issues, how might a Commerce Corridor impact a community, what are some ways to deal with those impacts, what could particular solutions cost?

Why conduct the study?

Transportation demand is up. Freight shipment volumes are growing. I-5 is at or near capacity, and rail is at, near or over capacity. The current system

is aging. Commerce interests in the region are interested in improving area transportation in order to move goods and services throughout the region with increased efficiency. Area residents are faced with tougher traffic congestion every day and desire a resolution to this dilemma in order to increase the region's quality of life. With these various elements in mind, the Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Department of Transportation to conduct a preliminary study into the feasibility of a conceptual Commerce Corridor that would relieve pressure on the north-south flow of goods and traffic west of the Cascades.

The study process

This study, expected to be presented to the Legislature in January 2005, will encompass six main elements:

- Developing a way to define and evaluate feasibility
- Determining the need/interest in different features for the Corridor (rail, utility, road, etc.)
- Developing preliminary cost ranges for various elements of the project
- Outlining the legal and statutory issues associated with different parts of the project
- Identifying potential environmental issues
- Outlining potential community issues and strategies to address them

The study will also include two public forums to distribute information and gather input from interested citizens and groups:

- **Bellingham**
Wed., November 10, 2004
6PM to 8PM
Whatcom County Courthouse
Council Office Chambers
311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham
- **Longview**
Thurs., November 18, 2004
6PM to 8PM
Cowlitz PUD
961 12th Avenue, Longview

Following the information gathering phase of this project, the project team will present its report to the Legislature. No recommendations will be made at this point; findings will be informational purposes only. Following this presentation, the study process will be complete.

Where to send comments or questions

If you have any comments or questions regarding this project, please contact any of the following:

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